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Chairman: Mr. de Rojas ..... (Venezuela)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 98: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*) (A/52/25, A/52/112, A/52/217-S/1997/507, A/52/284, A/52/318, A/52/347, A/52/447-S/1997/775, A/52/460, A/52/514-S/1997/815)

(c) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (*continued*) (A/52/413)

(e) Convention on biological diversity (*continued*) (A/52/413, A/52/441)

(f) Implementation of the outcome of the global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States (*continued*) (A/52/319, A/52/413)

1. **Mr. Palsson** (Iceland) said that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change represented the single most important achievement of the 1992 Earth Summit. Its adoption had signalled an unprecedented commitment by the world community to prevent serious damage to the climate before it was too late.

2. In the context of the negotiations on the Kyoto protocol, differences in baseline starting points, as well as economic structure, must be taken into account in setting quantifiable emission limits and reduction objectives. The gradual replacement of fossil fuels by renewable energy sources was unavoidable if the global community was to move towards sustainable development with regard to climate change. Development of renewable energy sources should be vigorously promoted. For some small island developing States, that could even be a matter of survival. New commitments made as part of the Kyoto protocol must not prevent the Parties from continuing to use renewable energy sources.

3. **Ms. Khan-Cummings** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that, while some progress had been made in institutional development, the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States had not met expectations. Issues had been addressed in an isolated way, whereas a comprehensive approach was needed to link science and policy in the areas of climate change, loss of biological diversity, ozone depletion and land and water degradation. Nevertheless, such recent initiatives as the development of a vulnerability index and efforts by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNDP to mobilize additional project resources could be viewed with optimism.

4. At the national level, Trinidad and Tobago had been fostering ecologically sustainable development through the Environmental Management Authority. Government agencies and ministries were taking a lead role in project implementation, in collaboration with women's organizations, youth and community groups.

5. As a result of globalization and economic liberalization, external factors were having an enormous impact on the national development efforts of small islands. The Commonwealth Ministerial Group on Small States had emphasized the need to ensure that small States fully shared in the benefits of globalization, regionalism and international trade. For instance, urgent action was needed to address the situation facing banana producers, who relied heavily on banana production and thus were highly vulnerable.

6. In conclusion, her delegation anticipated that real progress in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action would be noted before the review scheduled for 1999.

7. **Mr. M'Mella** (Kenya) said that Kenya had ratified the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Government had put in place a national committee to oversee its implementation. Full implementation of commitments under the Convention by a developing country, however, was entirely dependent on the timely provision of new and additional financial resources. Kenya called on the international community to meet its financial commitments under the Convention and to aid developing countries with the costs incurred in fulfilling their reporting obligations. It also encouraged nations to abandon unsustainable patterns of production and consumption which had contributed to greenhouse gas emissions, and to adopt cleaner production technologies and make them available to the developing countries.

8. Despite the importance Kenya accorded to the Convention on Biological Diversity because of its increasing contribution to the national economy, Kenya's biological diversity continued to be threatened. To address those problems, the Government had put into place environment and forest policies and framework legislation for environment and development and wildlife, and it was in the process of establishing a commission to resolve land use conflicts. Despite Kenya's concerted efforts to fulfil its commitments under the various environmental conventions, the major obstacles remained lack of adequate, stable and predictable financial resources and lack of appropriate technology transfer from North to South. The successful implementation of the conventions depended on the

willingness of the developed countries to meet their obligations.

9. **Mr. Baikhodjoev** (Kyrgyzstan) said it had been acknowledged at the recent special session of the General Assembly that, despite some positive results in the implementation of Agenda 21, progress in achieving sustainable development had been slow. Chapter 13 of Agenda 21, on the sustainable development of fragile mountain ecosystems, also known as the "mountain agenda", had greatly increased knowledge about the protection and development of mountain regions and their significance for watercourses, biological diversity, tourism and investment. Although efforts had been undertaken at the national, regional and subregional levels to achieve the goals of Agenda 21 by establishing mechanisms for the protection of fragile ecosystems, little progress had been made at the international level. The entry into force of the Alpine Convention, however, gave hope that the achievement of that objective was nearer.

10. Mountains were an important source of fresh water, which was not a renewable resource and would become increasingly scarce if global warming and population growth continued at the current pace. In that context, the rational use of watercourses took on primary importance. His Government believed that some form of economic value should be placed on the use of water resources which would provide additional incentive for their effective use and preservation. The uranium debris and other radioactive waste deposited at the mouth of two of its rivers during the time of the former Soviet Union posed a great danger to Kyrgyzstan and could cause an ecological disaster whose effects would spread throughout Central Asia.

11. Kyrgyzstan's proposal to proclaim an international year of mountains had found support at the 1997 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, and his delegation hoped that the General Assembly would support it as well.

12. **Mr. Manele** (Solomon Islands) said that the integration of environmental and economic policy was difficult to achieve, but his Government was attempting to move in that direction. His delegation looked forward to the review of the Barbados Programme of Action scheduled for 1999 and appreciated the support of the international donor community in mobilizing resources for its implementation.

13. Turning to sectoral issues, he noted that the forestry sector accounted for 50 to 60 per cent of total export earnings in the Solomon Islands. The Government was taking steps to improve sustainable harvesting practices and reforestation programmes. The Government was also committed to ensuring that owners of resources obtained fair benefits from them in order to generate investment in other commercial activities. In the fisheries sector, a comprehensive review of the tuna industry and other offshore fishing activities would be undertaken. Training and research were very important for the sustainable development of fisheries and agriculture.

14. As a State party to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Solomon Islands was implementing a number of activities, including the designation of certain areas as world heritage areas and the drafting of legislation on the environment and wildlife management and protection. Work was under way on a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, which would form the basis for its first national report to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and would require considerable donor support to implement. It also participated in regional environmental programmes coordinated by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme.

15. His delegation supported the views expressed on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States with regard to climate change and natural disaster reduction. Small island States, including Solomon Islands, were particularly vulnerable to global warming and sea level rise. At the national and regional level, his country would be implementing a programme aimed at producing a greenhouse gas inventory and identifying vulnerable areas for action. Every effort must be made to agree on mitigating the impact of climate change during the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in Kyoto.

16. Solomon Islands had been organizing rural workshops to build awareness of natural disasters and train community leaders in disaster preparedness. However, international cooperation must be enhanced in the development of early warning systems and in the adaptation process. In that connection, specialized training and technical assistance were necessary to supplement national efforts.

17. The El Niño phenomenon had caused drought and freshwater shortages, warming of the oceans and loss of economic resources in small island countries such as Solomon Islands. The international community must be prepared to assist them.

18. Capacity-building in the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, required human resources development and training, the development of an environmentally sound and adequate energy supply, the expansion of rural and urban infrastructure, the improvement of health services and water supply and the efficient

utilization of available resources. In its efforts to build national capacity and maintain responsive government institutions, his Government was embarking on a reform and structural adjustment programme that stressed participation by the private sector. It was grateful for the support of the international community in that endeavour and hoped it would increase. In that context, his delegation called on all States to implement the recently adopted United Nations Agenda for Development.

19. He expressed gratitude to the Government of Japan for hosting the recent South Pacific Forum Leaders Summit, held in Tokyo, and for its assistance to developing countries, including small island States. He also acknowledged the existence of Australia and New Zealand within the South Pacific region and of non-governmental organizations.

20. **Mr. Prieto** (Venezuela) said that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, which his country had signed, should form the basis for the Committee's deliberations. Not only were those instruments legally binding but they also took a global, integral and flexible approach to environmental protection. An integral approach must take into account vital sinks of greenhouse gases and reservoirs of biodiversity, including forests and marine and coastal systems. In Venezuela, such systems, which accounted for a very large portion of the national territory, were designated as national parks, reserves and other protected areas.

21. Further commitments on the limitation of greenhouse gases should be deferred until the potential impact of anthropogenic emissions could be scientifically confirmed. It would also be necessary to determine the economic and social impact of prevention and mitigation measures. Similarly, in drafting a protocol on the limitation of greenhouse gas emissions, it would be important to analyse its potential impact on national economies, particularly those of the developing countries. A mechanism should be established to compensate countries that would be adversely affected by mitigation measures, particularly developing countries that were highly dependent on the production, processing and export of fossil fuels. Consistent with principle 16 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the industrialized countries, which maintained unsustainable production and consumption patterns, must bear the main responsibility for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

22. The provisional regime for the financing of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change should become permanent. The economic and social costs of climate-change measures, particularly in the developing countries, must be addressed by the international community at the earliest possible date. New and additional financial resources and appropriate technology must be transferred to the developing countries on preferential terms.

23. **Mr. Don Nanjira** (World Meteorological Organization) recalled that the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change had been convened by WMO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 1990. In 1970, WMO had issued the first authoritative statement on climate change, and, in 1979, had convened the First World Climate Conference. The Organization issued an annual statement on the status of the global climate for use by Governments, policy makers, scientists and the general public. It implemented the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by providing scientific and technical support to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It hoped that, at the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention, agreement would be reached on stronger commitments to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the twenty-first century.

24. Together with other interested organizations, WMO was carrying out climate-related activities under chapter 9 of Agenda 21 by, *inter alia*, providing assistance for the socio-economic development of various countries and operating the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) and other environmental monitoring systems. It was also receiving greater support for its activities relating to the El Niño phenomenon, which was causing dryer-than-normal conditions in southern and eastern Africa, northern Australia, north-eastern Brazil, India, Indonesia and the Philippines; warmer winters in North America; and wetter-than-normal conditions in several other places.

25. Under the Convention on Biological Diversity, WMO promoted conservation and the rational use of resources, helped to forecast and combat forest fires, protected agricultural production and crops and promoted the conservation of marine species and the operation of fishing industries. It provided information on atmospheric winds and temperatures, sea temperatures and currents and ocean fronts, all of which played a vital role in fishing activities.

26. In implementing Agenda 21, WMO stressed capacity-building and the transfer of appropriate and affordable technology to the developing countries, countries with economies in transition and, in particular, small island developing States. Its objective was to enable national meteorological and hydrological services to play a greater

role in the achievement of sustainable development. Its efforts in the area of national capacity-building were focused on training, the provision of more accurate and timely forecasts and warnings, and public education and awareness with regard to natural disasters. To that end, WMO supported a number of tropical storm warning centres in various regions and a public weather services programme, which focused on countries that were prone to natural disasters, particularly the small island developing States.

27. **Mr. Sfeir-Younis** (World Bank) expressed the World Bank's concern at the continuing link between environmental degradation and poverty. The Bank was encouraged, however, by the fact that one third of its client countries were implementing national environmental strategies. It also welcomed the operation of the Global Environment Facility as an effective financing mechanism.

28. The World Bank had outlined a five-pronged programme of action for the environment, which addressed the areas of climate change, biodiversity, ozone depletion, desertification and the water crisis. In the area of climate change, the World Bank believed that the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change must make a strong commitment to a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The Bank would help developing countries to benefit from the investment by States members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in controlling climate change. In partnership with the Global Environment Facility, it would implement a large-scale programme of renewable energy investment in an effort to deal with global warming.

29. In the area of biodiversity, the Bank was launching a "market transformation initiative" with the private sector and non-governmental organizations in order to ensure that forest and marine products industries were environmentally aware. As a first step, it had invited the administrators of some of the world's leading forest products companies and conservation organizations to join in the Bank's efforts to check forest degradation. It had also formed a global alliance with the World Wide Fund for Nature with a view to achieving, by the year 2000, a network of protected areas representing at least 10 per cent of each of the world's forests types. With its client countries, the Bank would attempt to ensure the conservation of an additional 50 million hectares of forest ecosystems and the sustainable management of tropical, temperate and boreal forests by the year 2005.

30. In the area of ozone depletion, it had developed a programme to eliminate the production of chlorofluorocarbons in the Russian Federation where half the world's supply was produced, by the year 2000. To that end, he requested the financial support of the international community.

31. In the area of desertification, the World Bank — already the largest financier of drylands investment — had embarked on a revitalized rural strategy that stressed the linkages between poverty and land degradation. It was helping to introduce improved agricultural techniques in order to combat desertification and restore degraded land. It was also willing to assist in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa by establishing mechanisms to mobilize financing and coordinate implementation. Lastly, it would address the water crisis by lending approximately US$ 35 billion of the US$ 600 billion needed by developing countries and was committed to continuing its support of the Global Water Partnership and Regional Seas Programme.

32. In all of its endeavours, the Bank was expanding its partnerships with the private sector and world environmental organizations to improve environmental standards.

33. The Bank was consolidating the supervision of its own environmental and social activities and was establishing procedures for more in-depth monitoring of the environmental policies of its own operations.

34. **Mr. Ravou-Akii** (Vanuatu) expressed his delegation's support for the statement delivered by the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the statement delivered by the representative of Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

35. His delegation believed that the graduation of Vanuatu from the list of least developed countries was premature. The small island States of the Pacific region were particularly vulnerable to economic and ecological setbacks because of the distance separating them from the principal markets, the declining prices of raw materials, their limited number of export products and the fragility of their economies, which were extremely open. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the progress achieved through the Department for Economic and Social Affairs on the elaboration of a vulnerability index for small island developing States. It also welcomed the fact that the expert group meeting to be held in New York in December would renew the work carried out thus far on the vulnerability index.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.